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Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security

Report of the First Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Sylvester Ekunaayo **Rowe** (Sierra Leone)

I. Introduction

1. The item entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security" was included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly in accordance with Assembly resolution 55/28 of 20 November 2000.

2. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2001, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the First Committee.

3. At its 2nd meeting, on 4 October 2001, the First Committee decided to hold a general debate on all disarmament and international security items allocated to it, namely, items 64 to 84, which was held at the 3rd to 11th meetings, from 8 to 12 and from 15 to 17 October (see A/C.1/56/PV.3-11). Thematic discussions on the items were held, and draft resolutions were introduced and considered, at the 12th to 17th meetings, from 22 to 24 and on 26, 29 and 30 October (see A/C.1/56/PV.12-17). Action on all draft resolutions was taken at the 18th to 24th meetings, on 30 and 31 October and on 2, 5 and 6 November (see A/C.1/56/PV.18-24).

4. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security (A/56/164 and Add.1).

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II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.3 and Rev.1

5. On 15 October, the Committee had before it a draft resolution sponsored by the Russian Federation, entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security" (A/C.1/56/L.3).

6. At the 17th meeting, on 30 October, the representative of the Russian Federation introduced a revised draft resolution (A/C.1/56/L.3/Rev.1), which contained the following changes:

(a) The ninth preambular paragraph, which read:

"*Considering* that it is necessary to prevent the illegal use of information resources or technologies or their use for criminal or terrorist purposes",

was replaced by:

"*Considering* that it is necessary to prevent the use of information resources or technologies for criminal or terrorist purposes";

(b) In operative paragraph 1, after the words "in this field", the words "consistent with the need to preserve the free flow of information" were inserted;

(c) Operative paragraph 4, which read:

"4. *Requests* the Secretary-General, with a view to considering and defining existing and potential threats in the sphere of information security and possible measures to limit them, as well as to studying the concepts referred to in paragraph 2 of the present resolution:

"(a) To conduct, taking into account the replies received from Member States, relevant research within existing financial resources and with the assistance of governmental experts appointed by him on the basis of equitable geographic distribution, and with the help of Member States in a position to render such assistance;

"(b) To submit the results of that research to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session",

was replaced by:

"4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to consider existing and potential threats in the sphere of information security and possible cooperative measures to address them, and to conduct a study on the concepts referred to in paragraph 2 of the present resolution, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts, to be established in 2004, appointed by him on the basis of equitable geographical distribution and with the help of Member States in a position to render such assistance, and to submit a report on the outcome of the study to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session".

7. The Secretary of the Committee made a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General concerning the financial implications of draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.3/Rev.1.

8. At its 20th meeting, on 31 October, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.3/Rev.1 without a vote (see para. 9).

III. Recommendation of the First Committee

9. The First Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 53/70 of 4 December 1998, 54/49 of 1 December 1999 and 55/28 of 20 November 2000,

Recalling also its resolutions on the role of science and technology in the context of international security, in which, inter alia, it recognized that scientific and technological developments could have both civilian and military applications and that progress in science and technology for civilian applications needed to be maintained and encouraged,

Noting that considerable progress has been achieved in developing and applying the latest information technologies and means of telecommunication,

Affirming that it sees in this process the broadest positive opportunities for the further development of civilization, the expansion of opportunities for cooperation for the common good of all States, the enhancement of the creative potential of mankind and additional improvements in the circulation of information in the global community,

Recalling in this connection the approaches and principles outlined at the Information Society and Development Conference, held at Midrand, South Africa, from 13 to 15 May 1996,

Bearing in mind the results of the Ministerial Conference on Terrorism, held in Paris on 30 July 1996, and the recommendations that it made,[1]

Noting that the dissemination and use of information technologies and means affect the interests of the entire international community and that optimum effectiveness is enhanced by broad international cooperation,

Expressing concern that these technologies and means can potentially be used for purposes that are inconsistent with the objectives of maintaining international stability and security and may adversely affect the security of States in both civil and military fields,

Considering that it is necessary to prevent the use of information resources or technologies for criminal or terrorist purposes,

Noting the contribution of those Member States that have submitted their assessments on issues of information security to the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraphs 1 to 3 of resolutions 53/70, 54/49 and 55/28,

[1] See A/51/261, annex.

Taking note of the reports of the Secretary-General containing those assessments,[2]

Welcoming the initiative taken by the Secretariat and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in convening an international meeting of experts at Geneva in August 1999 on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, as well as its results,

Considering that the assessments of the Member States contained in the reports of the Secretary-General and the international meeting of experts have contributed to a better understanding of the substance of issues of international information security and related notions,

1. *Calls upon* Member States to promote further at multilateral levels the consideration of existing and potential threats in the field of information security, as well as possible measures to limit the threats emerging in this field, consistent with the need to preserve the free flow of information;

2. *Considers* that the purpose of such measures could be served through the examination of relevant international concepts aimed at strengthening the security of global information and telecommunications systems;

3. *Invites* all Member States to continue to inform the Secretary-General of their views and assessments on the following questions:

(a) General appreciation of the issues of information security;

(b) Definition of basic notions related to information security, including unauthorized interference with or misuse of information and telecommunications systems and information resources;

(c) The content of the concepts mentioned in paragraph 2 of the present resolution;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to consider existing and potential threats in the sphere of information security and possible cooperative measures to address them, and to conduct a study on the concepts referred to in paragraph 2 of the present resolution, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts, to be established in 2004, appointed by him on the basis of equitable geographical distribution and with the help of Member States in a position to render such assistance, and to submit a report on the outcome of the study to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session;

5. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-seventh session the item entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security".

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[2] A/54/213, A/55/140 and Corr.1 and Add.1, and A/56/164 and Add.1.